

Afterwords

by Lazy-Jane68

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Summary: Chizuru is learning to kick butt, An enemy is hiding on the horizon. But what will happen when she gets pneumonia? The ending that should have happened. With some major changes. This is a basic summary, each chapter will have a more specific one.

1. Chapter 1

****Thank you for taking you time to read this. Please spare an extra second to review. This is my first publication. Wish me luck! To those that do review and those that do: Thanks! I won't do shout outs, I think you readers would like to get to the story right? I will use honorifics occasionally in this only becasue they do in the anime and I like using them but I will try not to overdue it.****

****Disclaimer: I DO NOT own any of this franchise(personally wouldn't want to.)****

****This is just my story in reaction to only getting to episode 9. I read ahead and then got angry and I cried when I found out the ending...this is kind of the "afterwords" of everything that happened as I would want it to go.****

****_Chapter1:_****

"Again, I want you to do that drill again." Saito Hajime said calmly. He stood a few feet away from hi student. The only that he took on to tutor privately. The young student nodded and wiped sweat from her brow. She began to slash and strike imaginary enemies, Saito himself stood motionless and resting lightly on the hilt of his katana. His body was still but his eyes were watching every minute move his pupil made.

"Freeze." Saito said. Instantly the 17-year old was motionless, waiting for his instruction. Saito walked over, looking her up and

down. She had grown in the past few years. The slightly flat chested insecure brash girl and become a developed well-respected, determined, still brash woman. It had become hard for her to stay disguised as a boy as of late but Sannan-san had thought quickly of a plan and now every day the woman bound her chest in cloth to flatten her chest.

"Turn your foot out more. If you keep your foot pointing in like that you could trip and die, which would be inconvenient." Saito said, sounded almost distracted. Saito was listening. He may have been focused on his student but he still turned his ears outward listening for abnormal sounds—the headquarters was protected by him and a handful of other guards, everyone else was on patrols or missions.

"Oh, Sorry Saito-san, I thank you for your help." The young woman smiled. Her hair and clothes were damp with sweat, she looked tired.

"Enough for today, go change your clothes. The others should be getting back soon.

>Saito said, wearing a rare small smile.<p>

"You are probably right Saito-san, Thanks again for your help. I'm going now." The young woman flitted away.

"Something seems off about you, for a while now Chizuru. Please don't push yourself too hard." Saito said to her disappearing back, he knew she didn't hear him though.

Chizuru quickly slipped into clean clothes, in her time her she had learned the art of quick clothes changing, the captains tended to walk in unannounced and to avoid any more dangerous situations she quickly mastered the skill. She shuddered remembering a particular moment when Okita-san was ready to kill Heisuke for walking in on her practically naked.

"Early afternoon, I still have time to do laundry and clean floors." She said to herself. She began running around the complex gathering dirty clothes to be washed. In an almost-too-small moment she had a mini-mountain of clothes next to her. It was amazing how much dirty clothes she had gathered so quickly. She smiled and began washing the filthy samurais' clothing. She was getting good at doing this so before sunset she was on the last piece of clothing that needed washed. Chizuru was too busy scrubbing a stubborn stain to notice the men surrounding her, looming over her. When she finally noticed the looming gang around her she barely repressed a scream.

"You guys! Why would you want to scare me? I am only still a novice I don't have the awareness of others that you masters do." Chizuru stood up swaying unnoticeably, to normal people, but these men noticed.

"If you are bored enough to scare me you can at least help me hang your laundry. How went patrol?" Chizuru questioned.

"Fine, nothing was out of the ordinary. There seems to be more general acceptance of us lately." Sanosuke Harada said quietly.

"That's great. I'm glad you all are back safely." Chizuru bent down to pick up more clothes and as she started to hang them, black spots appeared in her vision. She grabbed the clothesline and shook her head. That only increased the black spots and dizziness she was feeling. She breathed in and out a few times and the episode passed.

"Chizuru! Chizuru! Hey, are you okay?" Okita Soji asked, worry pulled down at the corners of his mouth and at his brow.

"I'm fine, just thinking of what to make for dinner." She replied cheerfully plastering a fake smile on her face.

"Chizuru, didn't you make supper last night?" Heisuke Todo asked.

"And dinner the 5 nights before that?" Shinpachi Nagakura said.

Chizuru opted not to reply and continued hanging laundry. She finished slightly passed sunset. She decided to first empty the wash buckets out then clean the floors. She tried several times to lift the buckets of water but with no results. _'What is happening to me? I can't be getting sick can I?' _she just stood looking into the water; the others watched her strain to lift something she could have done in her sleep.

"Chizuru, stop. What are you hiding from us? What is wrong?" Soji demanded.

"Nothing is wrong. I don't think anything is wrong. There shouldn't be anything wrong." Chizuru said, she picked at her fingers going through the days in her head, wasn't time for _that_. She seemed upset with something. Harada walked over and took care of the buckets before she could protest Okita clamped his hand over her mouth.

"We want an explanation. We want it now." Soji growled out. His voice had taken on a deeper, more aggressive tone.

"Nothing is wrong. I mean I started getting dizzy and seeing spots a little bit ago. Also I keep myself and this place clean I don't physically do that much. I am perfectly healthy. I shouldn't be getting sick." Chizuru elaborated when Okita uncovered her mouth.

"That doesn't mean you can't get sick idiot. You should take some medicine." Heisuke said.

"No! I am fine. I can beat this with pure willpower. If you excuse me I need to clean the floors. Stay off them." Chizuru left and cleaned the floors in known record time. When she was done she began preparing dinner. Shinpachi stood at the door way watching her flitting around like a butterflyâ€"stirring there, adding here, setting things down- it was graceful. Everything was now done and everyone was served the men got a nice well-made dinner but Chizuru only made _onigiri_ for herself. She was clearing Okita's and Sanosuke's trays when she began to cough. She continued to cough and cough and cough. When she finally stopped she was bent over double gasping for air. She had dropped the trays early into her coughing fit and Okita moved them out of the way in case she collapsed. Okita

crouched by her side supporting her as she tried to breath. The captains all looked at the pale Chizuru in Okita's arms, panting and trembling. She was awake but her breathing was quick and shallow. She was covered in a fine sheen of sweat.

"Hajime-kun, go get Doctor Matsamoto and tell him it is urgent." Sannan said.

"No. Don't go get him. I'll be fine. I just need a minute to get my breath back to normal." Chizuru closed her eyes and her breathing returned to normal. The men in the room found it obvious that she had fallen asleep. The handful of men nodded to each other in silent agreement.

"Soji-kun, please take Chizuru to her room, stay with her. Everyone else let us clean up from dinner. After those who want can stay in her room for the night, I know you will all stay up worrying anyway." Toshizo Hijikata said quietly. The group dispersed with Okita going to Chizuru's room and the others to the kitchen to clean up.

After a sometime, the stars and moon had finally come out to shine and while most people would be sleeping 4 men sat chatting quietly in a room by the courtyard. They were discussing mundane things-the next party, the next mission, how Soji could beat Heisuke much to Heisuke's easily offended pride almost led to a screaming match. They were laughing at the antics of the two when they heard a mumbling and rustling of fabric. The four surrounded Chizuru quietly. They were surprised at what they saw.

They had seen men beaten into bloody pulps, they had seen the light leave a dying man's eyes, they had seen the look of desperate men holding tightly onto their ideal and moral they found that worth dying for but they had never seen someone as worn as Chizuru did now.

Chizuru was ghostly pale and had bags under eyes that looked like bruises. She was trembling ever so slightly and could barely hold herself up. Her eyes were dull and lifeless they held no luster like they usually did. Even her hair seemed limp and wrung out. Her shoulders were slouched under an invisible weight, it made her seem years older. Her mouth and brow were pulled down like an old lady's. Chizuru looked dead tired to these war hardened fighters.

"Where am I? What happened?" Chizuru murmured to herself. She rubbed her face and the exhaustion left her body. The men silently swore to never mention that to anyone ever. Okita felt as if he had seen a new hidden side of Chizuru no one else had seen.

_ 'How many times has she felt that way with no one to talk to, no one to support her?'_ Okita thought to himself. A light cough quickly brought him back to the matter at hand.

"_Chi-zu-ru-chan_. How are you feeling?" Okita said quietly. The others were silent letting him handle the delicate situation.

"I'm fine Okita-san. What are you doing here? It isn't morning already is it?" Chizuru sat up quickly in alarm but almost instantly collapsed.

"Chizuru! Please don't move. Just lie down and rest. We are all

worried about you but we were the only ones that decided to stay in your room." Okita explained. Chizuru gave him a small smile and shrugged. She was used to having someone in her room almost every night the guys like to check up on her or talk to her which usually ended in them sleeping on a spare futon she swiped for that reason.

"Do you need anything Chizuru? I think there is some rice left for some onigiri." Heisuke said.

"No food, I'm not hungry. But some lavender tea would be lovely if we have any." She said simply. Her eyes widened and she sat up again. "Please don't force yourself to get it. I can easily get it." She quickly stood up and swayed slightly.

"Chizuru! What do you think you are doing? Get back here now before you faint again." Okita demanded.

"I'm fine. I can easily make the tea. I will be right back." Chizuru waved in reassurance and took a few steps. She could feel the world tilting and her balance being compromised. _'uh-oh'_ she thought before she felt something warm and soft supporting her.

"See what I meant, you idiot. The others can get you tea and the rest of us a snack. I am gonna tuck you in like the child you acting like." Okita chuckled lightly. He carried a limp Chizuru back to the futon as the other three disappeared, understanding the veiled command.

"Chizuru what am I going to do with you? You are so stubborn, so determined." Okita whispered. His words fell on deaf ears for the sickly girl in his arms had already fallen asleep.

2. Chapter 2

****Disclaimer: I don't own this franchise.****

****I was going for angst and internal strife. I also wanted some more Soji/Chizuru(also I know I spell his name weird but this is how I spelled it in Ch.1). I also let someone important make an appearance...the villain.****

****Hey everyone! I finally got Chapter 2 up a little later than planned and a little longer than planned as well. I hope you all enjoy it. Please follow or review, it make my day when I see the email about a follower or reviewer. Please take an extra second to review.****

****Thank you all for you support!****

****Now here is:****

****_Chapter 2:_****

A bright light was shining on Chizuru's face. She groaned and rubbed her eyes, trying to ignore the voice telling her to wake up. Chizuru analyzed the sun's angle with a yelp.

"Midmorning already? I didn't make breakfast or tea for the patrol

shift. I'll be reprimanded for sure." Chizuru sat up on her elbows, trying to collect the energy to stand.

"When do you sleep? It is amazing why you're sick isn't it? Why with the way you push yourself it's a miracle." Sanosuke said sarcastically from the doorway. He stood, barefoot with dripping hair, against the doorframe smirking at her.

Chizuru stuck her tongue out childishly. She opened her mouth to speak when an aggressive growl was heard from her abdomen. The pair chuckled.

"I only push myself like that so you guys can focus on matter important to you. I know: you survived without me but _just barely_." Her last few words had the air of an old argument about them, for she said that each time someone asked her to relax.

"I know. Are you hungry? I suggest some more _onigiri_ solely for the fact anything more substantial may lead to you throwing up." Sanosuke flashed a grin and walked up to her, helping her stand. "Come on, I believe moving around helps you get better as much as rest does." Sanosuke took hold of her elbow; showing his support was there if she wanted or needed it.

"Thanks Sano-san. I am feeling particularly thirsty." Chizuru said as she slowly tread down towards the common room. _'Maybe I can take a bath later.'_ She smiled for the prospect was pleasant. When Sanosuke and Chizuru finally arrived at the room the captains all cheered.

"Great now we can all eat!"

"Chizuru-chan is finally up!"

"Let's dig in!"

Chizuru laughed lightly but it was enough to make the men in the room quiet down. She looked around at each of the smiling faces, the bright eyes, and the relaxed posture. _'All my life I have looked for the one place I belongâ€"my nicheâ€"in Edo I didn't have anyone staying with me often, I was alone a lot. But here, here holds always laughing faces, a family that would do anything for each other. I feel like I belong here. I want to belong here. The question is: Do I really belong here, with them? I want to. I want to.'_ Chizuru allowed those thoughts to die and flutter away into the dark depths of her mind.

"I am parched. Is there any tea?" Heisuke handed her a lukewarm cup of chamomile tea with honey. Chizuru sniffed it and sighed, it was perfect. She greedily drank the entire cup in a few hearty gulps. She politely wiped her mouth when she was done. "Thanks! Mhhmmm, something smells good. Who made breakfast?" Chizuru inhaled deeply a few times.

"Sorry, flattery will get you nowhere. Here is your breakfast _Chi-zu-ru-chan_." Okita handed her a plate of rice balls at the sight of made her moan but she accepted with a smile making everyone chuckle.

"If this isn't delicious, I will kill you." Chizuru threatened with a

dead-serious face. The others instantly roared with laughter, the others throwing out encouraging remarks or other insults.

The room grew quiet; pardon the sounds of eating and the usual food argument. Chizuru felt and saw the men all staring at her throughout the meal. She understood they were worried, they were unsure of what to do or what happened to her.

"Guys, I'm not an invalid. I'm as healthy as a horse. I am not made of glass, stop worrying so much it will ruin your good looks." Chizuru said, with her eyes closed as she enjoyed the not-surprisingly delicious onigiri from Okita.

"No, invalid you are not. But we want to take care of you." Shinpachi said with a sincere smile.

"You all watch out for me each time we go out. How bout for today, I watch myself while you do the patrols." Chizuru jumped to her feet in eagerness, all eyes flew to her. When she kept her balance an inaudible sigh of relief came from them.

"No, I'm in charge of patrols today and I refuse to let you leave my sight. If you go at all, I don't want you to get worse." Okita said with his eyes on Hijikata. Hijikata nodded and Chizuru knew she'll be prohibited from leaving headquarters until deemed otherwise.

"Fine, fine Okita-san is right. I'll stay here for the day. Maybe I can bake a treat for when you get back." Chizuru sat down on the floor, the picture of an obedient woman. Okita knew instantly she had something up her sleeve, she never gave in easily. The others seemed to think the same thing.

"Soji-kun, if she isn't allowed to go she will sneak out and cause even more trouble. Maybe she can visit with her friend, Osen-chan?" Harada asked. Okita and Hijikata shared a look and Okita sighed and nodded. Chizuru looked up and nodded emphatically. The other captains chuckled at her actions. The group then went and prepared to leave for the afternoon patrols.

Chizuru and Okita walked together behind the main group. The division had split already to do their assigned jobs. They were walking at a slower pace, for Chizuru seemed to be doing some shopping. She already had two bags filled of veggies, meat and other necessary products. The excursion seemed to be doing her some good; her cheeks were a healthy pink from the chilly autumn air. Okita was wearing his usual patrol outfit but as a precaution put on a second haori in case Chizuru got cold. He did really worry about her, they all did. Chizuru had brought a light into the hearts of the Shinsengumi. She had an effect on them all that no one understood and the men seemed okay with that.

"Okita-san, I think I got everything we needed. I am glad I came today. The fresh air is definitely helping my lungs." Chizuru smiled brightly at him and he nodded. They walked in companionable silence for a while longer. He watched as she walked with a spring in her step turned into a light tremor throughout her body and then it developed into violent shivering and semi-convulsions.

"Yuki, Itsuki come here now." The two showed up in the blink of an eye. Yuki was handed the groceries and the other found himself

holding Okita's blue Shinsengumi haori. When their brains caught up to the present, Okita had wrapped Chizuru up in his extra one and put on the blue one and was now carrying Chizuru bridal-style. Okita nodded to Yuki in thanks.

"Itsuki, would you accompany us to headquarters? It is time for her to be heading back, if you would be ever so kind to carry those groceries for her?" Okita's facial expression made it obvious that it wasn't a question. "Yuki, you are in charge for the remainder of the patrol. I can count on you right?" Again it wasn't a question. The trio left in a swish of fabric and flying leaves.

The trio arrived at headquarters with no trouble. Without a word, Itsuki took the bags to the kitchen while Okita took Chizuru to her room. She had stopped shivering now that she was inside but to ensure she stay warm, Okita asked Saito to make a warm drink. When Saito brought the drink Chizuru gratefully sipped it and a look of confusion crossed her face.

"It is called hot chocolate, it is a family recipe. It would be inconvenient if you caught a chill along with your cold." With that he walked back to the kitchen. Chizuru continued to sip the unfamiliar drink quietly.

"You can leave. Like I said before, I am not an invalid so why is everyone treating me like one? So I got a little dizzy, it happens." Chizuru said, sounding like a spoiled child getting yelled at. She even had her bottom lip pushed out in a slight pout. Okita leaned forward rubbing his thumb over her bottom lip, inducing a blush.

"To most people, I wouldn't worry because to most people I would write it off as, yes, a simple dizzy spell but it never has happened to you in the years you have been here. We are worried for the lack of precedent in this situation, Chizuru you have never ever been sick in the 5 years you have been with us. Don't you get how scared we are, how scared I am?" Okita grew silent, he had said too much. Chizuru sighed, 'They just aren't getting it.' She scooped closer to Okita looking at his slightly bare chest, She saw the stark white bandage wrapped around his rib cage. She thought back to the incident that caused it; she had stuck her nose in where it didn't belong again.

She had come across another clan's hideout when questioning about her father. She barged into their meeting and was instantly up to her teeth in deadly swords. She drew her sword and began blocking attacks from all directions. Chizuru knew attacking was foolish, so she decided not to fight backâ€”just protect herself. After a few minutes Okita had barged in and dealt with them but Okita was also trying to protect Chizuru, so he was limited in mobility. One sword had gotten passed Okita and heading for Chizuru's throat.

"Got you, no boyfriend no is there?" The man sneered. Chizuru had no time to react as the sword came arcing through the air towards her throat. She closed her eyes against the coming pain and death but they flew open at a familiar grunt.

"Got you." Okita leered. Chizuru looked around, Okita had single handedly defeated the couple dozen enemies. When she looked at him her face became ashen for the death blow for her was a deep, clean wound in Okita's side.

"Okita-san, you're wounded. Let's get back to the compound" Chizuru said. The duo then went back and Chizuru carefully bandaged up Okita's side. Her hands were shaking but she confidently finished the job. Okita wrapped his warm, large, rough hands around her tiny, delicate, smooth hands.

"Thank you for all the help Chizuru. I will see you at dinner? Please get some rest, I'm fine thanks to your practiced hands" Chizuru flushed slightly and nodded. She then left Okita's room and made herself some plum tea.

"Okita-san, I understand that you were worried but my job is to make sure your lives run smoother. Even if you all did fine without me, I am free-loading otherwise. I need to get the chores done so all you have to worry about it keeping the peace. You guys only should worry about being samurai not keeping your compound clean and hygienic and the people healthy." Chizuru explained. Okita could tell that she was adamant about her views.

"I know that is what you think and believe. But why are you so resolute about this?" Okita asked. Chizuru hesitated, her brows furrowed in concentration.

"I am unimportant. You all are so protective of me but I really don't matter. My life is insignificant compared to those of the Shinsengumi. What will change if I die? Nothing, nothing will change, I am insignificant." Chizuru said quietly and hesitantly as if she was coming to the realization at that second.

"That is not true at all, Chizuru! I never want to hear you say that again! You have made us all better people. You helped us see the light that we had forgotten; you helped us remember what we are: Samurai. It is our job to keep peace and honor alive and follow our code. How can you say that you are insignificant? You are special to me, to Heisuke, to Shinpachi to everyone. Never forget that, dear Chizuru, Never. Understand?" Okita's eyes were bright with emotion. He was tightly squeezing her hands, staring straight into her eyes. Chizuru nodded in agreement.

"I get what you are saying Okita-san, I really do but I also feel that I have to repay everyone. Each of the captains has at one time saved me from danger that I got into of my own doing. I need to repay them somehow don't I?" Chizuru said with a solemn face. Okita grimaced; his words weren't getting through just yet.

"If you want to repay them for them saving you, Chizuru, then take care of yourself. If the vice-commander and other captains and I feel you worthy of being saved time and time again the best way to pay back that trust would be by caring for yourself so our time isn't wasted. You may think that by making our lives easier is the way to repay us but we want you to keep living and stay with us." Okita stood up and pulled Chizuru up also. The two smiled at each other.

_'I really do like talking with Okita-san. He makes me feel like I belong.' _Chizuru thought. When they got to the hallway they separated, Okita making a comment about sparring and Chizuru wanted to finally take her bath. _'Okita-san is right, I should take better care of myself. Maybe Dr. Matsamoto will be here by supper and I can

get some medicine.'_

Chizuru gathered her bathing materials and asked a division member to keep the bath fire going. When she got there, the bath water was already warm and getting hotter. She grinned; a warm bath is just what she needed. She slipped into the water and began scrubbing her hair. She was relaxing in the bath when she heard a soft melodious sound. She froze trying to listen and the sound grew louder gradually. She continued to listen not noticing her eyelids getting heavier and heavier, after a few minutes she promptly feel asleep, minutes passed and the division member fanning the bath left thinking she had already gotten out, or should have by now. The bath water grew to freezing quickly and Chizuru began to shiver still not waking up. A man walked in He wore a cloak covering his face but he was of average height and build, he sat down and stared at the naked, shivering Chizuru.

"I will finally kill you Chizuru. Your time here will end soon and I will watch your last minutes tick away." He said voice hard and matter-of-fact. The room grew quiet but outside the bath house, the man cursed and vanished without a trace. The voices grew louder and louder and the door opened once again. In the door way stood Shinpachi, Heisuke, and Sanosuke. They looked in and instantly looked away.

"We are sorry Chizuru; we didn't know you were in here. We will leave now." Heisuke said. Shinpachi looked at her face to see her reaction upon that closer inspection Shinpachi noticed her skin slowly turning blue and she was no longer shivering.

"Something is wrong. Go get the other captains, set up a futon in her room. Hurry now." Shinpachi ran in and gathered Chizuru in her clothing and sprinted into the building. Heisuke and Sanosuke darted off.

"I need two squad members now." His words were responded with the arrival of two of his squad members." You get tea lots of tea and some way to keep it warm. You get as many spare blankets as possible." The two ran off to do their assigned tasks. Shinpachi quickly and politely dressed Chizuru in warm clothing placing her on her futon. At that moment, everyone arrived. The captains all piled into the room, the blanket finder handed them off and they were placed gently on Chizuru who was starting to shiver again. The tea making member cam with kettles of tea and cups, following behind him was someone carrying a pot of burning coals and some wood.

"This is the only way I thought of to warm the tea; there shouldn't be a fire hazard if the fire is kept low like it is. Sit the kettles in or around it and they should stay warm, it also warms the room, I will drop of more wood in a bit, sir!" the squad member said, Shinpachi and the others nodded and as he left Dr. Matsamoto came in. In a Nano-second uproar occurred; the captains surrounded the man of medicine.

"Everyone needs to get out, I am going to examine her and I would like it to be private. It is the honorable thing to do is it not? Time is of the essence men." Matsamoto said. The men scattered to the hallway in seconds. Matsamoto quickly did his examination and let the men back in. They sat in a circle around the prone woman, looking at the doctor expectantly.

"She has long hard battle in front of her. She has a common cold and almost froze to death. She was on the brink of death; it is because she was brought in here so quickly. She will need to be watched 24/7 for relapses. She is going to need all of you to get better." Doctor Matsamoto explained. The men nodded with their faces somber.

"Cold, I am so cold. Where am I? What happened? Doctor Matsamoto, what are you doing here?" Chizuru mumbled quietly. They all looked at her worriedly. She smiled softly trying to assure them that she was in fact really okay.

"We walked in the bath house and found you passed out and turning blue. So Shinpachi brought you in here, we have only be talking till you woke up. Do you want some warm tea?" Heisuke asked gently. After she nodded Okita handed her a cup of lemon ginger tea. She blew on it a few times and sipped it slightly.

"You are going to be sick for a while. Frankly you were on the brink of death. Do you remember what happened before they showed up?" Doctor Matsamoto said. Chizuru nodded and finished her tea and buried herself under the blankets. Her blankets showed the regular rise and fall of her chest signaled her falling asleep. They men sat around talking about what is going to happen and who will be the one to assist the most. Doctor Matsamoto explained that when healing she shouldn't be exposed to many people.

"I will do it. I don't do much around here anyway." Okita said looking at the lump of blankets. "What really happened? Maybe we will solve the mystery tomorrow. We need to go to bed. I will stay in here." Okita said. The others nodded and dispersed. Okita built up the fire so the coals would last the night. He readied his futon and lay down.

'Chizuru, my darling Chizuru, I swear upon my katana that I will protect you. No matter the problem you will always have a supporter.' With that Okita Soji fell asleep, preparing himself for the days ahead.

End
file.